



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GROUND SQUIRRELS TEST POSITIVE FOR PLAGUE ***Chance of Human Exposure Slight, But Precautions Should Be Taken***

Blood samples collected from two ground squirrels at the Cedar Grove Campground near the Palomar Observatory have tested positive for the rodent plague.

"This is the first time that plague has been found at this campground; however it has been identified at neighboring campgrounds in years past," said Gary Erbeck, director of the Department of Environmental Health. "We know that we have plague in San Diego County, so our Vector Control program conducts routine testing to alert the public about where it is and how to avoid it."

Plague is a bacterial disease of wild rodents that can be transmitted to humans through the bite of infected fleas. To date, there have been no locally acquired human cases of plague reported in San Diego County. Flea populations are monitored, and control measures are taken as necessary at this campground, and others, to reduce the potential for human exposure.

Yellow *Plague Warning* signs are posted in all areas where plague has been confirmed. Visitors, hikers and campers in rural mountain areas should look for these signs and always follow these precautions to prevent contact with the fleas:

- Avoid contact with fleas, ground squirrels, chipmunks, and other wild animals.
- Do not feed, touch or handle wild animals.
- Do not rest, camp or sleep near animal burrows in the ground.
- Protect pets by keeping them on a leash, use flea control, or best of all, leave pets at home.
- Contact your doctor immediately if you become ill within one week of visiting a known plague area. Symptoms include a sudden onset of fever, chills and tender swollen lymph nodes.
- Do not touch sick or dead animals; please report them to Vector Control.

For more information about plague surveillance, call the Vector Control Program at (858) 694-2888 or visit the website at www.SDVector.com.

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